8: Lužbetak E-4 (no date) 1951 RH1 Caucasia RH1

Diphthongs occur very seldom in the Caucasian languages, the strongest tendency to form such being in Chechen.

On the other hand, the poverty of the vocalic system is amply compensated for by the richness of the consonantal systems of the three groups, a fact especially true in regard to the languages belonging to the Northwestern branch. The Abkhazian language, which, as we have seen, has only two basic vowels, has as many as 70 different consonants.

The aspirated tenues *p' t' k'* occur in all three branches. Similarly, in all three groups we find glottocclusive tenues and affricates *p' t' k' (ts') č'*. Lateral consonants (l^o, t^o, $t^{\cdot}$, k^o) are represented in all three groups: in the Northwestern by the Ubykhian and Kabardian languages, in the Northeastern by the Avaro-Andi sub-group, and in the Southern by the Tushian language. There are, besides these, many other interesting and unusual consonants. To mention but a few, we find in the Caucasian languages, for example, the so-called Polish ł or English *w*; then, there are interesting palatals, dorsals, labialized *ź* (something between *ž* and z, or less correctly what Dirr terms the "whistling sound" of *žzv*), reduced consonants, emphatic consonants. These are but a few examples showing the richness of the consonantal system of the Caucasic languages.[18]

2. The Class System

Words are divided not so much according to gender as to class, a phenomenon found in all three linguistic groups. In the Northwestern group we find the classes in Abkhazian, not however in Ubykhian or in Kabardian. The Abkhaz distinguish between rational and non-rational beings. The class system is most fully developed in the Northeastern group. Generally speaking, one class includes all rational beings male and female after puberty; whereas, one to four classes generally embrace all other beings. The language of the Bats (Chechen tribe in Tushetia)[19] and the Ingushi distinguish six classes; the Dargwa, Andi, Lak, Rutulian, Archi, Tsakhur languages have four classes in all; the Avaro-Andi sub-group has three; Tabassaranians distinguish between persons and things, while the Kurins, Aghulians and Udins no longer have the class system. In South Caucasia the system is either non-existent or is still in its initial stage of development.[20]

3. Numerals

The numerals of all Caucasic languages are based on the vigesimal system.[21]

4. Verbs

The Caucasian languages are distinguished for their extremely complicated verbal forms. In the Northwestern languages complete phrases and subordinate

[17] A. Dirr, *l. c.*

[18] A. Dirr, *op. cit.*, pp. 29—34. See also N. Trubetzkoj, "Die Konsonantensysteme der ostkaukasischen Sprachen," *Caucasica*, VIII.

[19] Dirr, less correctly, says eight classes are distinguishable in Bats.

[20] A. Dirr, *op. cit.*, pp. 342 f.

[21] A. Dirr, *op. cit.*, pp. 358—361.